



## **Career management strategies: Fitting into the Washington job market**

Many family members will be returning to the Washington Metro area this summer after years of overseas assignments. Often these family members are concerned about how they will fit into the Washington job market. There are several free and inexpensive job search resources available to our family members and FLO would like to encourage the publication of this information (list available at end of article). However, prior to returning to the U.S., there are many things family members can do in preparation. These activities are all part of good career management.

**Good career management** involves you, the job seeker, as the President of your own company. As a Foreign Service spouse, career management is vital to maintaining a career in this fast-paced, frequently changing lifestyle we live. So, the first step is to define the direction you want to move in and develop a plan of action that will get you there.

Career counselors always advise clients to begin with **self-assessment** so that any goals and plans made will fit with an individual's values, skills, abilities, priorities, personality, motivations, lifestyle requirements and organization make-up. There are a wealth of books and articles describing the formal and informal tools available to complete a self-assessment. There are also many web sites offering self-assessment (list available on opposite page).

Whatever resource the job seeker chooses should feel comfortable to the job seeker. It is vital to complete this self-assessment step, as career goals that do not match a person's characteristics are doomed to failure.

The next step in career management involves **research**. Job seekers, whether changing careers, returning to a career, or continuing an established career, must:

- \* know the market;
- \* know that a given position or career field matches identified strengths and weaknesses;
- \* determine the odds of securing a position in the identified fields and functions; and

\* be aware of his/her value in the job market.

By accessing salary surveys (see list at end of article), the job seeker can determine a salary range prior to beginning the job search.

Research can be done in several ways. **Informational or investigative interviewing** is one way. Asking someone currently in a position of interest is an excellent place to obtain information on the specifics of a position or field. Other resources include Temp Work, for an insiders view of a company or profession, Job Boards, for current information from people in positions of interest, Career Counselors, for assistance in locating positions and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which lists several hundred professions and job descriptions of each.

Once the research stage is complete the job seeker is ready to begin **actively searching for the right job**. Family members can access unlimited resources if they have an Internet connection. One source is **The Network**, a bimonthly newsletter published by the Family Liaison Office that lists numerous government and non-government positions. To receive this resource, family members can e-mail FLO and request to be placed on the mailing list. *The Network* is available via e-mail or U.S. mail. Additionally, there are a large number of excellent government and non-government job-hunting web sites that provide job listings and job seeking advice. A lengthy list of such web sites is regularly published in *The Network* and can be accessed on the FLO Intranet site at: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/employment.html> To receive any FLO publication simply send a request to [flo@state.gov](mailto:flo@state.gov) and list the publications you would like to receive.

Family members interested in beginning work immediately upon returning to the U.S. need to be reminded to **hand carry** their resume, evaluations, SF-50s (USG personnel actions), and any other documentation they might need in their job search. The perfect job may be available immediately but be lost because the candidate is awaiting the arrival of their lost luggage, delayed air freight or household shipment that holds all their important paperwork that vanished somewhere between post and D.C.

Once a family member arrives in the D.C. area, there are many additional **resources** to which they have access. The first they should avail themselves of is the consulting provided by the **Employment Program staff of the Family Liaison Office**. The Coordinator of this program, Paula Riddle, can assist spouses interested in working for the U.S. Government. Paula's assistance in guiding spouses through the labyrinth of regulations and procedures and assisting them in avoiding the pitfalls is invaluable. Employment Specialist Debbie Thompson and Employment Program Assistant Liza Bright can assist spouses looking for non-government employment.

Another D.C. resource is an employment workshop sponsored by the **Transition Center** (Overseas Briefing Center) and held at the Foreign Service Institute. This workshop is entitled "**Targeting the Job Market**" and is offered four times

each year. Interested spouses should contact Sharon Pound of the Transition Center at (703) 302-7268 or email at [PoundSL@state.gov](mailto:PoundSL@state.gov) to register. The participants of this workshop develop their job searching skills through hands-on experiences with self-assessment, networking, resume writing, and interviewing.

There are also several local ***One-Stop Employment Centers, Women's Centers*** and ***Career Centers*** that are available to our spouses. Many of the services provided are free or inexpensive.

Although the Washington job market has recently experienced a small cooling off, jobs are still abundant. Finding employment that is satisfying and enjoyable is always difficult and in this current market will take a little more time and effort. Encourage your spouses to take advantage of the valuable resources available to them. These resources can provide them with the necessary knowledge required for choosing the right job.

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**FAX:** 202-647-1670

**Email:** [FLO@state.gov](mailto:FLO@state.gov)

**Intranet web site:** <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo.html>

**Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)**

**Tel:** 202-663-3042

**FAX:** 202-663-3146

**Intranet web site:** <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cdrc/>

**Transition Center (TC)**

**Tel:** 703-302-7277

**FAX:** 703-302-7452

**Email:** [FSIOBCInfocenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfocenter@state.gov)

**Intranet web site:** <http://fsiweb.fsi/obc/courses/classes.htm>

**Career Learning Center**

**Tel:** 202-260-6614

**FAX:** 202-260-2616

**Email:** [Mpowell@ibb.gov](mailto:Mpowell@ibb.gov)

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